

Kan. Cong. Dist. No. 1

Keith Sebelius
Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SELGEM

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kansas	
COUNTY: Ness	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME	
COMMON: Ness County Bank	
AND/OR HISTORIC:	

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Northwest corner of Main and Pennsylvania			
CITY OR TOWN: Ness City			
STATE Kansas	CODE 67560	COUNTY: Ness	CODE 135

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Lodge Hall Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: Mrs. Effie G. Herrick			
STREET AND NUMBER: P. O. Box 9392			
CITY OR TOWN: Colorado Springs	STATE: Colorado	CODE 80909	CODE 08

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Register of Deeds			
STREET AND NUMBER: Ness County Courthouse			
CITY OR TOWN: Ness City	STATE: Kansas	CODE 67560	CODE 20

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: NONE			
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Kansas	COUNTY: Ness	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
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8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1890

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry☐ losophy☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☒ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature☐ itarian☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ness County Bank in Ness City was founded by N. C. Merrill on July 1, 1885. Construction of the three-story stone bank building, which is locally known as the "Skyscraper of the Plains," began in the fall of 1888. Drawings presented by James C. Holland of Holland and Hopkins in Topeka were chosen by the bank's board of directors from nine plans submitted by various architectural firms. The building contract was awarded to William Ruff of Ness City on November 29, 1888; the stone, which came from Ness and Chase counties, was dressed by D. J. Rogers of Newton, and the stone detail in the arches of the building was handcarved by P. A. Narey of Bazine. By July, 1889, construction had reached the second story, and by the end of October the firm of Eator and Craver of Ness City was preparing to work on the roof and cornice. The Ness County Bank moved into its new quarters July 9, 1890, with N. C. Merrill as president and J. G. Arnold as vice-president. Also housed in the bank building were the Merrill Trust Company, the Ness County Real Estate Company, and a new job press with which Merrill printed a monthly real estate journal. The reported cost of the finished structure was \$35,000.

Merrill's banking business, which served wide areas of Kansas and Colorado, thrived for a time, but when hard times came in 1893, the bank building was sold for taxes. The Ness County State Bank, a successor to the Ness County Bank, continued to operate in the building until January 8, 1898, when it was taken over by the First State Bank of Ness City. The result of this merger was the Citizens State Bank which occupied the old Ness County Bank building until 1922. The last bank in the building for any length of time was the First National Bank which operated until the early 1930's.

The Ness County Bank building also housed the county court and offices from 1903 until 1917, served as a U. S. post office for approximately 20 years beginning about 1940, and was used for apartments and business offices. Presently the Masonic Lodge occupies the third floor, and has done so since 1919; the first floor is used as a meeting room for elderly citizens; a Christian Science reading room is in the basement; and there are a number of offices still in use.

The Ness County Bank is important to the county and community for the part it has had in their development. Architecturally, this handsome stone building stands as a monument to the fine craftsmanship prevalent in the late nineteenth century. Its imposing size and exquisite detailing makes it a landmark on the western Kansas plains.

7. DESCRIPTION

(Check One)

☐ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed

CONDITION

(Check One)

☒ Altered ☐ Unaltered

(Check One)

☐ Moved ☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Ness County Bank building, located in Ness City, Kansas, is one of the most elegant buildings in West Central Kansas. This Romanesque style building is approximately 85 feet long, 55 feet wide, and 50 feet high. A dominant square entrance tower is located at the southeast corner, overlooking the intersection of Main street and Pennsylvania avenue. Two other entrances, one on the east and the other on the south, also serve the building.

The bank building has a full basement and stands three and one-half stories above ground. The building materials are a combination of cut and carved limestone laid in common bond. A finely carved stone parapet, which also serves as the cornice, encloses a flat tar roof.

The fenestration of the building has numerous shapes and groupings. Window shapes vary from completely circular to rectangular to pie-shaped. Groupings range from single circular or rectangular openings to groupings of two and three rectangular windows with arched or rectangular transoms. Doors are basically rectangular in shape with arched or rectangular transoms. Door and window frames are of wood while the lintels and sills are limestone.

Probably the most striking feature of the building is the entrance tower with "Ness Co. Bank" engraved in the arches on the south and east sides of the tower. Its pyramidal roof structure is flanked by four cut stone spires. The stonework on the tower exemplifies the fine craftsmanship of the 1880's. Done in fullleated leaf, the carvings are used as column and pilaster capitals.

The exterior of the building appears to be basically as it was originally except for a second pyramidal tower roof at the south entrance which was blown off by a severe windstorm.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Kansas	
COUNTY	
Ness	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

9. "Ness City Contemplates Buying Her Historic 'Prairie Skyscraper,'" Great Bend Tribune, March 19, 1967.
Ness City Times, January 5, October 18, November 1, December 6, 1888; March 7, 14, April 18, 25, June 13, July 25, October 17, 24, November 14, 21, December 12, 1889; January 2, March 27, June 19, 26, July 10, 1890.
"Ness City," Topeka Daily Capital, September 13, 1889.
Ness County News (Ness City), October 27, 1888; March 16, April 20, 27, June 15, 1889; January 8, 1898; August 15, 1903.
Walnut Valley Sentinel (Ness City), December 8, 1888; August 22, 30, 1890.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Biennial Report of the Kansas Bank Commissioner (Topeka, State Printer, 1892, 1893-94, 1895-96, 1897-98, 1899-1900, 1901-02, 1903-04).
Handbook of Ness County, Kansas (Chicago, Burch Publishing Co., 1887), 36 p.
Kansas Bankers Magazine, v. 25, no. 5 (June, 1935), p. 94.
Kansas Bankers Magazine, v. 26, no. 4 (May, 1936), p. 98.
Kansas State Bankers Association Annual Reports (assorted publishers, 1887-1931).
Millbrook, Minnie Dubbs, Ness Western County Kansas (Detroit, Mich., Millbrook Printing Co., 1955), pp. 96, 130-137, 273.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	0' 0" 0"	0' 0" 0"		0' 0" 0"	0' 0" 0"	0' 0" 0"
NE	0' 0" 0"	0' 0" 0"		38' 27" 15"	99' 54" 18"	
SE	0' 0" 0"	0' 0" 0"				
SW	0' 0" 0"	0' 0" 0"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

One acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:		Richard D. Pankratz, Planner	
		Charles Hall, Architectural Consultant	
ORGANIZATION		DATE	
	Kansas State Historical Society		October 25, 1971
STREET AND NUMBER:			
120 West Tenth street			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE	
Topeka	Kansas	66612	20

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☒

Name

Nyle H. Miller

Title

Executive Secretary, Kansas State Historical Society

Date

December 10, 1971

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS